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"The Classics in Education."

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

BY

MARVIN R. VINCENT, A. M.,

PROF. OF THE LATIN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN TROY
UNIVERSITY,

JULY 21ST., 1859.

TROY, N. Y.:

A. W. SCRIBNER AND CO., BOOK, CARD AND JOB PRINTERS, CANNON PLACE.
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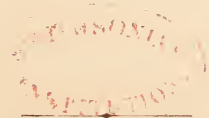
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ADDRESS.

In comparing my position on the present occasion with that of my Colleagues who have already addressed you,—I cannot but regard it as a misfortune that I alone am compelled to bear the burden of Antiquity. I am well aware that he who comes before an American audience as the exponent of the “dead languages,”—is liable, at the outset, to forfeit their sympathy; for though we affect, in these days, a partiality for antique models, and refer to the Goths for our churches and to the Greeks for our public edifices, and rummage the antiquarian catalogues for rare old books to fill our libraries,—the sentiment of reverence for age may be said in more senses than one, to be daily becoming feebler among us; and he therefore who comes up from the tombs of buried thoughts and words, and would unfold the lessons which they teach, is likely to find his offering slighted for that of those who deal in present realities and practical truths. For our age lives eminently in the present; and with subjects of this nature my colleagues have already come to you. I ought not therefore to be surprised if you hasten from the land of shadow in which for a time it will be my duty to detain you,—and from the companionship of humanity in its childhood, to commune with those who can answer the demands of an age satisfied with nothing short of demonstration by figures, which will not because they *cannot* lie: who can belt the fertile hills with iron bands,

span the rivers with sweeping arches, or "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes;" bringing star-eyed science down into intimate and beautiful relations with the minutest truths of every-day life,—showing how every nodding wheat-field may say to your bones "*ye are my brothers*," and how the merry songster which hums in your teakettles over the evening fire, swells with huge ideas of lifting weights, driving steamers, and tunneling mountains.

The delicacy of this position is enhanced by the fact that modern Utilitarianism has set natural science in array against the class of studies which it is my duty to represent. Forgetting that the laws of harmony and mutual dependence prevail in the realm of knowledge as of nature, and that no single science stands, or *can* stand criticizing its fellows as they pass, but falls naturally and beautifully into its place in the great circle, sweeping round forever under the guidance of inflexible law, and showing oftentimes by its very aberrations the existence of some unseen, attractive power beyond, in the development of which the human mind may exercise its energies and grow strong by struggling;—it thus arises that the classics and natural sciences, especially the mathematics, have been constituted representatives each of a distinct mode of training; the exponents of two widely different views of mental culture; the one *objective*, looking straight from cause to effect, regarding the mind as an engine of power in proportion as to its ability to coin so many dollars per day,—the other *subjective*, not ignoring, but embracing the narrower view, and finding the perfection of all life, physical and intellectual, in the symmetrical outworking of a Divine ideal.

It is not my purpose, nor is it necessary here to discuss the soundness of the position which makes the two branches referred to representative. It is enough that I claim for the classics their appropriate place in the circle of the sciences; assuming as the end in view that

many-sided developement which we term "*education*." My object, therefore, is merely to lay before you a few thoughts which may serve to define more accurately the position of the classics in the educational scheme as unfolding at present in our own society.

We are presented, in this country, with those general phases which appear in the history of every growing people. An infant nation's earliest life is *physical*, not *intellectual*. The men who, with compass and symbol demonstrate the existence of a new continent, may pursue their researches in well-stored libraries, and amid the appliances of luxury; but linguists and historians may not guide the straining vessel through the waves of hitherto unfurrowed seas, or poets and painters cut down forests, swim rivers, hew out log cabins, or expel savages. The axe and the rifle have here, as elsewhere played their appointed part as the pioneers of the district school and the college. Log walls, decked with the trophies of the chase have preceded frescoed ceilings and copies from the old masters, and good and true citizens have been trained beneath the open heaven, ere statesmen have stepped forth armed with College lore, or scholars stirred the hearts of a hemisphere with the children of their vigils.

You will readily perceive the evil which is the natural outgrowth from this stock, and with which liberal education everywhere initiates her conflicts. Success in overcoming the constant opposition afforded by nature, calls into action a system of purely practical mental habits; a custom of looking in a direct line from an obvious cause to a speedy and well defined effect; a spirit which has already stamped itself deeply upon the nation, and evolved itself into that Briarean business life which is at once our pride and our disgrace. Hence the continual outcry of the public press for what it is pleased to call "*practical education*." Hence the unremitting attacks upon Colleges and Universities. Hence the cry "Give us something to learn of which the bearing upon our future lives shall be evident and palpa-

ble." Throw away your Latin and Greek, your Philosophy and Metaphysics; or at least abandon them to Doctors, Theologians and Pedagogues. "Away with them, crucify them!"

These considerations become important to us in view of our standing just at the turning point of public sentiment on this subject. Strongly as the tide has been running, an under-current has gradually set in the other direction. Men are beginning to awake to the fact that their unprecedented material prosperity requires an important element to complete it; to institute comparisons with older nations on some other grounds than the extent of territory or the amount of resources; to see that the only educational policy to which, nationally, we stand committed, is far too limited to meet the higher demands whose number and importunity daily increases; and to seek not only the *means of education*, but also, *what education means*.

To exhibit the superficiality of the common definition of the word *practical*, to show that the best practical men are not trained on the principle on which an American rail road is built, i. e. by the shortest and cheapest route; to prove that there is a vast practical power acquired in the mastery of those studies in which as in the classics we walk by faith and not by sight, as well as in what the Germans have sarcastically denominated "*the Bread and Butter Sciences*,"—to aid in making *men* not *machines*,—all are embraced in the work mapped out for our classical schools. May we not, therefore, with profit, examine some of the great practical truths which open to us in the study of language?

The etymology of two classical terms signifying "to speak," opens to us a beautiful view of the dignity attaching to language. Far back in the language of ancient India, they connect with a root meaning "to shine," and embracing, at the same time, the name of the great Source and Dispenser of light. Thus, through the power of

speech, man becomes "the manifester;" thus allied to Deity; receiving light from the great Dispenser, and, through speech, shining in his turn upon the world, which bows before his reflected radiance, and confesses that he hath indeed been made "but a little lower than the Angels." The same acknowledgment of the dignity of speech is manifest in the combinations of the words referred to. The language of Nature ever selects as an appellative that which sets forth the most prominent characteristic of the object, whether power or weakness. And so, from the whole number of infirmities which make up man's embryo existence and give him during that period a claim on human sympathy and protection,—the want of speech is selected as the expression of that existence; he is the "*infans*," the "*infant*," the "*non-speaker*."

A mighty truth, requiring only observation to confirm it, opens directly from this; to wit, that the whole history of man as a social being is a series of efforts at self-expression. "The human mind," says Mr. Donaldson, one of the leading philologists of England, "is naturally impatient of pure thought. It strives ever after objectivity; and endeavors to complete and fix its inward conceptions by some species or other of outward manifestation. The thought completes itself in the expression." I say only observation is required to confirm this truth. It may be traced, not only in the thousand forms of speech on whose wings the thoughts of the world, their loves and hatreds, their truths and falsehoods fly on their several missions of joy and sorrow; nor yet alone in the garnered treasures of libraries;—the musty roll and ponderous tome. There were stories written,—stories of power and conquest over man and nature, stories of man's own pride and the degree of his self-esteem, long ere the roll and reed secured them for the eyes of generations to come. The massive monuments which loom up in the morning twilight of time, the cities whose marred memorials set chronology at defiance and rear their time-stricken heads to laugh

at Time as he passes by,—Baalbec with massy temple columns still paying stern adoration to the sun, mute worshippers, alone left to tell of the throngs which, far back in the centuries, crowded his shrine,—the mound on the Tigris, which for years kept its secret so well, but which, smitten by the rod of science, opened to the astonished gaze of a waiting age, a tomb of kings and a sepulchre of empire, with the history of a buried race painted on its walls and its saloons ringed with the embodiments of its colossal imaginings,—Egypt with its tombs and labyrinths, its obelisks and avenues of sphinxes, Karnak, Philae and Ghizeh,—all mirror the same great fact that man has ceaselessly aimed to tell his conceptions of the world around him and the impress he has made upon it, not merely to his companions of a day or year, but so to embody them that the coming ages should turn their heads and pay him homage. And herein has he shown his recognition of the truth that it is the expressive power alone which links him to the future as well as to the present, and furnishes him, as men say, the key to immortality.

The progress of science, strangely enough, has illustrated the same thought. For science, in invading the realm of the abstract, has been compelled long since to have recourse to the aid of that which is so often arrayed against her: and the effort to symbolize such ideas as time, space, motion, continuity,—intuitions which, like a Proteus, evaded the grasp of expression, made the solution of a philological difficulty the test question of a new era in science and philosophy.

The same image and superscription is stamped upon the ordinary interchanges of thought in business, domestic and political life. Place man in solitude; and restless and unhappy, he frets at the reiterated claim of his inner nature which forbids the retention of what his own imagination creates, and demands of him not merely the reception of what he sees in man and nature, but its

reproduction in new relations under the light of his own understanding,—speech to express and complete the thought, and some other human soul as a tablet for its reception. And so in the more complicated relations which the developement of society presents. Every member, whatever may be his characteristics, or however intrinsically he may differ from each and every other member,—if he be true to the promptings of his own nature, cannot fail to bring to bear on that body with which he connects himself, the actual amount of power involved in his conceptions of existing facts and their relations. Hence it is not altogether the love of popular applause, or the promptings of pure patriotism, or the consciousness of impending national danger which calls the orator to the rostra, and draws from him “thoughts that breathe and words that burn;”—but a more deeply significant fact, underlying and embracing all these, that, wherever an earnest-hearted man *thinks*, be the impulse what it may, his inner self demands the use of his tongue or pen.

Thus, whether communicating in a few articulate sounds his few and simple wants, rearing huge masses of stone to express his contempt for the powers of this world or his reverence for those of another, building pyramids or painting walls, embodying the rude traditions of his ancestors in ruder verse that pleases his unaccustomed ear, and relieves his unpractised memory, or adding his tribute to the flood tide of an opulent literature,—his effort at expression in some form or other, upheaves itself like some mighty geological stratum; while the very longing for objectivity which prompts expression leads him, at least in the earlier stages of his history, to reverence in language the distinguishing seal of man’s nobility. As we cannot fail to recognize the fact, neither can we fail, with our brothers of the past to render homage to man *the speaker*, as the necessary complement of man *the thinker*. And as we are necessitated to call him *morally*

best who most successfully brings to bear upon his fellows the promptings of a noble nature, who best expresses by living every pure sentiment and generous impulse,—or as we acknowledge the influence of the man of strict business habits, in proportion as his seal is set upon such an amount of exchangeable media,—shall we not also acknowledge the intellectual kinghood of the man who, through the God-like gift of speech, vocal or written, most fully, deeply and permanently expresses his mind upon the world of mind around him.

The acquisition of a language among those who form and speak it, is a mere practical process, pursued, in all cases, with a view to the necessities of life, and in the majority of instances with no other object. To those, however, who study it as we study the Latin and Greek tongues, it becomes, though to some extent a desirable end in itself, chiefly a means in education. And I make this remark, simple as it may seem, because, even at this day, a most singular misunderstanding seems to prevail, which finds vent in the very common remark “Of what use are they? You will never speak, nor in all probability write them.” I do not propose to enter at present upon the discussion of the value of these studies as an end simply; though even this view of the question opens a broad vista of thought, and it would be easy to show that to him who seeks the evolution of power in literature, that of the ancients will furnish athletes with whom he may exercise his brawniest mental sinews, and food for his tenderest sensibilities.

But as a means of arriving at the principles of language as a science, of laying bare the great laws which underlie not one speech simply, but every conceivable form of speech,—as throwing a flood of light upon whatever path the student may hereafter pursue, as the only means of fully exhibiting antiquity, and bringing him into intimate contact with the men and minds of the past, as opening to him innumerable new sources of thought, ex-

tending the scope of his ideas and the range of his researches,—in a thousand instances which might be named, the study of language vindicates itself as one of the great living agents in education. “It is a mistake,” says Dr. Jelf, “into which none but shallow minds can fall, to speak lightly of an acquaintance with the accuracies of Grammar and Etymology, or to profess to find the classics useful only for the matter which they contain. I am persuaded that to such persons a great part of the value of the classics as instruments of education is lost; for surely it is better to learn to think *as* the ancients thought, than merely to know *what* they thought. So it would be better to be able to paint as Raphael, than to copy, ever so accurately, the Madonna. Nor, as it seems to me, do such persons realize the full value of the matter; for the connection between thought and language is, from the very nature and relation of each, so intimate, that it is impossible but that as a person makes himself better acquainted with the proportions, so to say, of language, he makes himself more master of the mysteries of human thought in general, and of the tone and feeling of the nation or man whose inmost mind he thus reads in the forms and idioms of their speech.”

We may, it is true, read of antiquity in History, but History herself cannot read antiquity save in the spirit of its language. Character may be delineated as vividly as words can paint it; but after all, “we see only the side which the artist chooses to represent;” and the difference is as between seeing painted on a wall of Nineveh the details of a siege or triumphal procession, and beholding the living warriors, with muscles knotted, and brows knit in the agony of the conflict, or passing proudly before us, decked in flowing purple and gold.

Going beneath the syntactical net-work wherein nature and art blend in such beautiful proportions, exhibiting how language, in becoming less true to nature, has become idealized and more purely intellectual, yet unable totally

to master the workings of impulse and passion,—furnishing no contemptible mental discipline in the analysis of the laws of its structure and in showing by analogies of mental phenomena how, grouping itself round certain salient points, it has crystallized into the myriad, complex forms of grace and beauty in which literature presents it,—going beneath all this, we are brought into contact with the living *words*; not simply *names* for conceptions, but direct evolutions of the conceptions themselves. And if, as humble students, we enter this mine of truth, with lamps trimmed and burning and eyes opened to behold and profit by the wonders of the place, we shall be constrained to linger long, and ever to love and search for words as for hidden treasure. For in every winding path of human history which traverses this domain, these gems spangle the walls of human experience that enclose it. On the floors we tread them beneath our feet, wrapped from sight amid accumulated rubbish, unless perchance some sparkling point reveal the existence of the treasure. Some large, clear, transparent, others many-sided, fringed with points of light; each motion tinging each transmitted ray with the richest hues: from walls and roof shoot glorious stalactites wrought by the slow droppings of centuries into shapes varied, beautiful and fantastic, springing boldly from distinct roots and struggling toward each other as they descend, until they hang frozen into one blended mass of translucent beauty. Some, bedded thickly and closely in every passage and chamber; others lying far back in the innermost deeps, where the darkness is thick, and the fossils of ages long gone strew the floor. Truly he who once finds where these treasures lie hidden, will soon “sell all that he may buy this field;” and in the words of Trench, “great will be our gains if, having these treasures of wisdom and knowledge lying round about us,—we determine that we will make what portion of them we can our own; that we will ask the words we use to give an account of themselves, to say whence they

are and whither they tend. Then shall we often rub off the dust and rust from what seemed but a common token, which we had taken and given a thousand times, esteeming it no better, but which now we shall perceive to be a precious coin, bearing the image and superscription of the great King: then shall we often stand in surprise and in something of shame, while we behold the great spiritual realities which underlie our common speech,—the marvellous truths which we have been witnessing for in our words, but, it may be, witnessing against in our lives.”

These are the only tracks by which the footsteps of a lost people, scattered by convulsion within, or pushed forward by pressure from without, can be retraced and distinguished amid the millions of “footprints on the sands of time;”—the fountains that break through the débris of ages, at rare intervals it is true, but sufficient nevertheless to allow us to trace back the rill to the great national fountain-head. Drifting here and there in foreign tongues, enwrapped in strange combinations, disguised by prefixes and terminations, they tell of conquest when no line on stone or parchment exists to recount what banners flaunted or what warriors grappled in conflict;—how predatory mountain bands overwhelmed a race of simple shepherds, or some cultivated and intellectual race absorbed within itself a handful of scattered tribes; and ever, as we combine these memorials, stronger and clearer loom up afar in the mist of early time, those mysterious mother nations, whose “line has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

We may, at this point, follow out a practical suggestion which can scarcely escape us in bringing this theme to bear upon the facts of the present. In the prevalence of the spirit of hostility toward the study of the languages, our theory and practice are essentially contradictory. No people aim so exclusively as we at the great end of linguistic study,—expression. American life is essentially diffusive. Not even the large admixture of caution,

shrewdness, keenness, or whatever name may be given it, which enters into the composition of a genuine American, is sufficient to keep him from so far disclosing himself even to a stranger, as to induce him, if possible, to believe that within his own cranium there is an exhaustless fund of original genius which, like the venerable Father of History, he could unfold if he would. No Yankee can sit in a public place for five consecutive minutes, without exercising his jackknife, and exhibiting his familiarity with that portion of the alphabet embraced in his own name, by carving the same in staring characters upon the first available tree, bench or house-side. We print books by the hundred thousand, and issue as many newspapers as the rest of the world together; yet we have no literature. Our very conceit ministers to this desire, and impels us to leave our impress, personal, material or intellectual upon everything with which we come into contact. Not a youth who, on the sanded floor of the academy, makes the old walls ring on a Saturday morning with "The boy stood on the burning deck" or "On Linden when the sun was low,"—but is fully convinced in the depths of his heart and brain that Washington is, at no late day, to be stunned into admiration with his eloquence, and that the ghost of Daniel Webster will follow his career of stumping as assiduously as "the morning drum-beat" does the sun. And, jesting aside, there is a question of no little importance growing out of this, which concerns us even more nearly than it did Rome or Athens. With those nations, especially the latter, wherein a strong national bias lay in the direction of liberal culture, there was an offset to the influence assigned the public harangue, in the equally important fact that this social bias demanded of him who assumed the orator's duty, a liberality and finish of cultivation corresponding in no small degree to the magnitude of the responsibility. The infatuation of Athens in her dealings with the great Macedonian, assume a less excusable aspect when studied in connection with the public

efforts of Demosthenes, the pupil of Isocrates, Isaeus and Plato, the imitator of Thucydides, the rival of Aeschines; and Rome, who trained her best orators for the forum with no less severity than she drilled her legions for the field, might well be pardoned if enthusiasm sometimes decided what was deserving of more lengthened deliberation, when Cicero ruled the rostra, whose vanity was only equaled by his eloquence,—his vacillation by the extent of his attainments, and who has left us in his own elaborate treatise his high ideal of the complete orator,—“*vis oratoris, professioque ipsa bene dicendi, hoc suscipere, ac polliceri videtur; ut omni de re, quaecunque sit proposita, ornate ab eo, copioseque dicatur.*” But among us the bias lies rather in the opposite direction; and into our midst whosoever will may come, and without difficulty gather a gaping, wondering multitude, who will laugh at his slang as the essence of wit, throw up their hats at his low personal abuse as a model of oratorical satire, and shout themselves hoarse, when, under the combined influence of association and whiskey, he becomes eloquent i. e. unintelligible. True, this is one of the extremes. We can lay claim to more respectable displays; yet the typical fact remains the same. We are most powerfully swayed by public speakers. A large proportion of men get not only their ideas but their language from the public journals, where from the very haste required in the issue, the style becomes anything but a model, and the employment of words to a great extent indiscriminate. The peculiar use, even pronunciation of a word by any favorite orator, carries it, in a short time, bodily into the vocabulary of every citizen. Who will say that, in a state of society in which oratorical display affords the surest guarantee of popularity, and the straightest path to influence, when a whole people stand before these oracles with as much reverence and as much gullibility as ever Greek waited at the shrine of the Pythoness, and bend before his words like the tall grass of the prairies which a spark may wrap in a

blaze,—who will say that the fountain-head needs not purging, and that some power should not be set walking up and down the land that may give back to language the truth and purity which are its native attributes, thus wresting it to holier purposes, and ensuring it nobler triumphs.

Truth of expression is a prime necessity to truth of thought. We have a faith in words which, exercised in other directions, would remove mountains, and which speedily reconciles us to any garb they may assume in our presence. "Words," says Fichte, "as commonly employed, form a cloud-land of half-understood presentations; in which the common consciousness, even of so called educated men lives, and *which is their truth.*" To those only who are wont to view them as invested with more than a merely *nominal* power, is their sacredness manifest. In their infancy they open frankly upon us their eyes, through which shines clearly their inner life: but as time calls them into action, little by little, at the requirements of a new custom, by a gradual attraction to the companionship of congenial neighbors, by a false shame, the offspring of a refinement,—they draw imperceptibly from the side of the mother thought, or carried away bodily like the Sabine virgins of old, are forced to colonize some new ideal field, and assimilate themselves to new associations as best they may. I am aware that we cannot always be strictly consistent even here. Changes of this nature seem, to some extent, involved in the laws of social progress and the increasing refinement of literary taste. Any man, for instance, would be stared at, who should express the reception of an insult by saying he had been *jumped upon*. If Mrs. Jellyby, in the excess of her devotion to the pagans of Borrioboola Gha, should send out appeals for *villagers*, her success would be at least questionable. We speak with as much indifference of a quarantine of five or six days, as Homer's heroes did of a hecatomb of twelve oxen; and we never state our conviction of man's *sin*-

cerity, by asserting that he is *unwaxed*. But it is at least in our power to get into our hands the clew which runs back through these windings. It is possible for us to oppose the use of words expressing ideas of power, grandeur, or transcendent excellence, in such familiar and false connections as will soon deprive them of all their intrinsic force. It is possible to prevent the destruction in our language of all claim to accuracy, by preventing this wholesale annihilation of distinctions. It is possible for us to cease these *unintentional falsehoods* which interlard our daily conversation. And that man who shall buckle on the armour to do battle in this field, shall find not his least reward in that he grows daily more jealous for truth, as well as more accurate in the expression of thought, and more keen in the detection of error.

It is time that we pass to a brief consideration of a question which has probably been asked already. Having endeavored to set forth language as a necessity to the completion of the distinction between man and brute, to show man's recognition of the fact developed in his efforts at expression,—that the success and completeness of his education is measured by his power of successful and permanent expression,—that the study of language thus becomes indispensable to his perfect moulding as scholar and man,—the question will naturally arise why the dead languages must be charged with so heavy a burden in the educational scheme.

A wide subject is here opened; but we must be content to view it from one point only. We have developed the idea that the mind strives after objectivity. Parallel with this and equally true is the fact that, in a large class of instances, the process must be inverted, and the mind *receive* certain impressions from without before it can proceed to give shape and symmetry to its inward conceptions. We do not expect the student to evolve, for instance, the great principles of numbers, and follow them out in their various relations, until we have given him a

“whereon to stand;”—certain facts, arbitrary if you will, which require, isolated, only an exercise of perception and faith; and begin to call out the reasoning power with the moment of their first and simplest combination, until, so fully master of these as to apprehend their relations at a glance, the mind begins to group them in new combinations and deduce new results; sweeps among the stars at will, or unaided, sustains itself in the measureless depths of infinite space. Archimedes engaged to move the world; but the prime condition was that a stand-point should be given him so that he might work *toward* not *from* it. This general principle may therefore be stated as peculiar to those studies whose office it is simply to train the mind for independent action hereafter,—they are to be pursued for the most part *ab extra*; so that the remark is in every sense true that “though the method of language is independent of any particular language, yet like every other science, it must have its facts as well as its laws.”

Now we must obviously not search for these in the ever shifting forms and fleeting idioms of modern speech. Fixedness is essential to constitute a model. The German, so copious in literature, so opulent in words, from its power of absorption and facility of combination drawing within its charmed circle whatever in other tongues may contribute to the fuller expression of its wealth of thought, classical, scientific, metaphysical,—how shall we chain this Leviathan long enough to daguerreotype his huge proportions? The same remark will apply to every living language; but not so with the classics. Still lie before us in statue-like perfection and repose those wonderful national elements which, gathering themselves up into gigantic forms of life on the plains of Central Asia, projected their shadow upon the two peninsulas which reach out into the Mediterranean as landmarks for the ages. Which, on the soil of Hellas, worked themselves out in the manifold types of a race for whose equals, intellectually, the world will long seek in vain;—the

stern, energetic, practical Spartan, the refined and brilliant Athenian, the enterprising and versatile Ionian; that moulded as well the heroes of Marathon, Leuctra and Thermopylae, as the oracles of the Pnqx, or the champions of the subtlest philosophies; that crystallized into superhuman beauty in Athens, which

“Gleamed with its crest of columns on the will
Of man as on a mount of diamond set,”

and darted their vivid rays through every word of a language fresh, warm and transparent, harmonious in structure and flexible to the touch of every thought which the subtlest reason could invent or the warmest inspiration strike out. Like the stream of Arethusa, preserving intact its native purity as it glided among the nations,—it welled up in all its original, sparkling splendor wherever it found a resting place; marking the successive stages of its development, nay, even of its decline, by no violent transitions or gaping chasms, but melting from one to another, as blend the tints of the rainbow. Vigorous in action yet delicate in constitution. Thriving in the immediate presence of the Greek intellect, yet pining when removed, and showing its intrinsic individuality by the tenacity with which it clung to the type of mind which had generated it. Before the eyes of him who, turning his back upon the strife and bustle of the present, looks down into the unbroken stillness of these ages, what a glorious procession passes. Homer, singing before sunlight in the morning of time,

“with broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense,
Of garrulous God-innocence.”

Hesiod, calm, simple, melancholy, didactic, whispering ever as he walks the fields, of the anger of Heaven, of human trial and human sorrow;—Anacreon and Sappho with brows circled with vineleaves, and hands full of purple clusters swelling with the drops of passion. Herodotus, with well worn staff, and sandals stained with the

dust of travel, pouring out with the simple garrulity of age the wonders of his journeyings,—overflowing with quaint legend, bold portraiture and pithy aphorism.

—“ bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear,
Slant-startled eyes that seemed to hear
The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.”

The noble band of the philosophers, high-browed and calm, with deep, earnest eyes, ever seeking to pierce the infinite and commune with Nature's secrets. Aeschylus, grand as the pyramids, and permeated with the deep, solemn passion which stands out in drops of godlike agony on the Prometheus, or strides with the terrific earnestness of superhuman vengeance through the Agamemnon. Sophocles, with eyes ever upraised to Heaven, and ears alert to catch the solemn footfalls of destiny,—serene where Aeschylus is awful, content to leave tortured demigods and remorseless furies, for the interchange of human sympathies and the common affections of the race. Not admitted, like him, to the table of the gods, but ever, like a sweet temple-bell ringing down the years and calling to worship. The profound, truthful, concise, passionless Thucydides; the graceful and sparkling Xenophon; Demosthenes, rapid, vehement, harmonious;—Isocrates flowing ever on and on in measured cadences like the long swell of a summer sea;—Aeschines, elegant, insinuating, artful; and Plato, “among whose venerable works,” to use the words of another, “we may stand as in a vast and consecrated fabric, vistas and aisles of thought opening on every side, high thoughts that raise the mind to heaven, pillars and niches, cells within cells, mixing in seeming confusion, and a veil of tracery and foliage, and grotesque imagery thrown over all; but all rich with a light streaming through dim religious forms,—all leading up to God, all blessed with an effluence from Him, though

an effluence dimmed and half lost in the contaminated reason of man."

The same elements under different phases, still heave their remains above the soil of Italy, centralizing in that city which could be content with no other name than "power" itself. Grand and colossal in its outlines, developing even in the myths which lie at the portals of its history that rude power which made it, in after years, the sole representative of universal dominion,—exercising like an infant Hercules its youthful limbs with struggle, until, like the immovable bulwark of granite, which, on its southern frontier bids defiance to the sea, it dashed off from it the various national inundations which in succession swept over the peninsula;—fond of action rather than of repose, exhibiting much of the vitality which characterized the Grecian intellect, yet uninformed by a taste so high and pure;—reverencing law as religion, stern and unyielding beyond nature, yet immoderate in indulgence as in self-denial;—commending and honoring individual integrity, yet ignoring good faith as a nation;—less independent in arts than in arms, willing that her sisters across the Ionian should furnish her with models of taste, the elements of her philosophies, and even the attributes of her gods, if she might set her foot upon their necks and lead their kings in triumph at her chariot-wheels. Exhibiting in her political history an ever increasing hatred of aristocracy, and a continued social struggle for the maintenance of popular privileges, yet a unit in that arrogance which acknowledged no equal, and made even conquest more galling. Vigorous in its national life; prompt and practical in devising and carrying out schemes for its support, undaunted by failure and strengthened by opposition, it well warranted Horace's eulogium

"Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus,
Nigrae feraci frondis in Algido,
Per damna, per caedes, ab ipso
Ducit opes animumque ferro."

From such characteristics the language was a natural outgrowth. Not flexible and graceful like its sister tongue, but hard and glistening under polish. A language of art rather than of nature. "Fit for embodying and expressing the thoughts of an active and practical, but not of an imaginative and speculative people." Full of energy and vigor, yet inferior to the Greek in permanency and vitality. Dealing with other tongues as its nation dealt with other nations; forming no alliances, but conquering; yet disclosing a vital weakness by its inability to escape a thorough remoulding by the nation whose prosperity Roman arrogance could ill endure,—or to prevent its literature from becoming a reflection of the Greek. Yet we still laugh at the broad humor, sparkling raillery, and ingenious intrigue of Plautus, and the refined wit of Terence. Lucretius yet towers in serene majesty like some cold mountain, leaning its snow tipped crest against the hard blue sky of winter, alone in his godlessness. Still in Virgil's verse hum the bees, and streams run laughing down the rocks, and the pelting hail rattles on the farm-houses; and again awake the pulses of the epic that throbbed in the story of Troy, and the tale of the much enduring Ulysses. Horace, graceful, witty, sententious, careless, sarcastic, now portraying, half laughing, half earnest, some social absurdity, now wreaking vengeance on some poetical quack, or compounding a bitter pill for a disappointed office-seeker;—anon framing with careless fingers verses that rollick and reel with Falernian, and again rising full plumed in noblest flights of lyric song;—Cicero, orator, poet, philosopher, equally in his element whether goading a Catiline or Verres, or, amid the shades of his beloved Tusculum unfolding the principles of Grecian philosophies;—Livy and Tacitus with pictured scrolls; Juvenal and Persiaus lashing with bitter wrath and keen satire the vices swept in from the East,—all are ours still, to compare, to study, to imitate;—Greece and Rome, language, institutions, laws, the past has left us as

a legacy. As they live in their language and literature, they are beyond the reach of change.

“ Within the surface of Time's fleeting river,
 Their wrinkled image lies as then it lay,—
 Immovably unquiet ;—and forever
 It trembles, but it cannot pass away.

If these views of the study of language be correct, surely it will not be strange if, on assuming the duties of this chair, I enter upon them under no small sense of responsibility. And yet I must confess that, in the popular view, which makes the classics representative of the system of liberal education, I cannot but rejoice that it has fallen to my lot to enter the lists with the champions of language. A few practical considerations which the subject and occasion seem to demand, and I have done.

The prosecution of these studies as it should be carried on during the earlier years of a college course, is justly viewed (in connection with other branches) as preparing the mind for the studies of the latter years, in which the pupil will be thrown more entirely upon his own mental resources, and introduced to inductive methods of study. Yet we cannot shut our eyes to the consideration that the national spirit of haste still pervades our educational as it does our social system. Two years, in the average of cases, suffice to read (?) the requisite amount of Latin and Greek prescribed by the college authorities, and the student enters college forthwith.

The consequence of this haste is, first, that the pupil is compelled to learn, and the Professor to teach what should have been thoroughly taught in the Academy or High School, and to spend one or even two years in mastering details of Etymology, Syntax and Prosody, without which he ought never to have been admitted to College ; so that as a consequence, he does not acquire the basis actually demanded to enable him to pursue successfully the studies of the two latter years.

Now one of three things is certain. Either the time spent in College is too short, the time spent in preparation for College is not long enough, or the training afforded by the preparatory schools is not thorough enough. And I do not hesitate to express my conviction that, until our Colleges unite in requiring as a qualification for admission to the classical course, at least as much actual knowledge as many of them succeed in conferring at the end of two years,—and in positively refusing to admit any student who has not acquired a *practical familiarity with the entire ground-work of the two languages*,—not until then will either these schools or colleges be doing the work which their position as representatives of liberal education renders binding upon them,—or our classical training be freed from the stigma of superficiality which at present it so richly deserves. The students of the great training schools of England,—Eton, Harrow, Bury, Rugby,—would throw completely in the shade most of our college graduates and not a few teachers, by the ease with which they dispose of linguistic difficulties which seem mountains to our young classicists. The graduates of the German Gymnasia which ought to answer to our high schools, but are more nearly akin to the colleges,—not content with stumbling through a few pages of a Latin classic, blasting out the difficulties with Lexicon and Grammar,—read, write, and speak the language with the utmost ease. And there is no conceivable reason why we should not attain the same standard. Surely, whatever in our scheme of education is worth learning at all, is worth learning well. But, if we would have thorough classical teachers *for* our schools, we must train thorough classical scholars *in* our schools. The truth is, much of the prevalent indisposition to the study of the languages is owing to the fact that the students are, in the majority of instances, left pretty much to themselves. Truly I have sometimes wondered as I have sat listening to a recitation consisting of a slipshod translation interspersed with a scattering of questions selected principally

because the teacher happened to know the answers,—that the ghosts of the ancients did not rise *en masse* and reproach him, not only for the abominable perversions of their ideas and language, but for his positive failure to go beneath the shell of words, and bring forth the power and beauty with which they are so richly fraught. I do not wonder that the large proportion of quondam classical students have learned to look upon a Greek or Latin Grammar with a shudder of horror; and that the old Xenophon, Livy, Horace and Homer are stowed away in some lumber room, and abandoned to the companionship of mice and spiders,—when, after having plodded drearily through the desert of nouns, verbs, pronouns and syntactical rules, times without number in the attempt to commit the whole to memory, they entered upon the history of Caesar's exploits with a restless desire of kicking Caesar for having dared to write commentaries, or wandered like the very ghosts themselves along the banks of Virgil's Styx, beholding a Charon in the pedagogue, and beyond the stream

“No light, but rather darkness visible.”

Shame on such instructors who go down into the tombs of buried thoughts and words like some mouldy sexton, only to rummage for an hour among the dry bones and coffins, and haul out a subject for some inquiring friend, instead of coming to their work permeated with a sense of the true dignity and beauty of language, and standing like the Prophet clothed with authority over the valley of vision, bidding the dry bones come together, and Antiquity revived to walk forth in all its glorious proportions.

A better day is beginning to dawn for classical and liberal culture. Society is making larger demands upon its educated men. Teaching is fast becoming a profession, and the preparation of text-books a philosophical study;—and the children are beginning to run with laughter and gladness where the fathers groped with tearful eyes and bruised feet. May we soon see the sun of that better day arise over Mt. Ida: and when in future years,

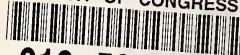


this University shall become in fact as well as position the educational Acropolis of your city,

"Dilectae matris blandae utaminte surgens,"

may you be reminded when each morning gilds its towers, and casts its shadow down the slope, and when amid the gathering darkness they stand out against the sky,—that, as in the ancient legend from the Troy of old went forth a band who, in the face of angry gods and unpropitious fates, through storm, and shipwreck and battle, bore the nation's guardian deities at last to the future home of empire,—so every year sends forth from among you a band of youth thoroughly armed with every element of liberal education; thoroughly disciplined to encounter perverted sentiment, ignorance, irreligion, fanaticism;—with pure tastes, broad views of life, noble purposes, and a vital piety warming and animating the whole,—carrying these influences to thousands of households,—to whom their Alma Mater pointing with just pride may say as did the Roman matron of her sons, "These are my jewels!"

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